RESTORATION REVIEW

If all our good Christian brethren could abandon every other center than Christ, and draw nearer and nearer to this unsetting sun of an eternal day, how soon would all roots of bitterness and alienation wither, languish, and perish. What a blissful cooperation and hallowed concert of action would ensue!

—Alexander Campbell

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If We Really Desire Unity: Give In A Bit

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The Sense of Scripture: Studies in Interpretation . . .

"IT MEANS WHAT IT SAYS"

In our effort to become more responsible in our interpretation of the Scriptures we must guard against those careless habits that tend to minimize the difficulty of our task. "What does it mean? It means what it says!" is one of these. It is a fallacy named in logic texts, equivocation, which means to use equivocal terms in order to deceive, or to be deliberately ambiguous. A politician, pressed for an answer on how he will vote on a controversial issue, answers, "I will vote for what is best for the country," is equivocating.

To say the Bible means what it says is to equivocate, for *that* is precisely the issue: *what does it say?* Yes, of course, the Bible means what it says, but what does it say? So, one is hedging when he resorts to such a tactic.

Not only is he hedging but he is also guilty of another damaging fallacy, *denying reality.* He doesn't know and he won't admit it, so he takes the easy way out, *It means what it says.* Or he denies the difficulty of the passage. No problem, for it means what it says. We do ourselves a disservice when we try to sheer the Scriptures of their difficulty and their mystery. While the Bible may sometimes be very simple to understand, it is overall a difficult book, one that abounds with obscurities. Honesty demands that we admit that often we don't know what the Bible means by what it says. Therein lies its greatness. Any literature that would propose to communicate the mind of God to mortal man could hardly be without mystery. We are always challenged to probe its depths, only to conclude with another who was smitten by its inscrutability: "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11:33)

The simplest statements of Scripture are often the most profound and transcendent, "past finding out" in any final sense. The idea of knowing God is an example. When the prophet Jeremiah points to the coming of a new covenant for a new people, he names an impressive characteristic:

> No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying "Know the Lord," for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sins I will remember no more. (Jer. 31:34)

This great passage is in the context of "This is the covenant that I will make in those days" (verse 33), and so we can see that *knowing* God would be experienced in a new and glorious way. But what does it mean to know God? It was a concept close to the heart of Jeremiah, for in Jer. 9:23-24 we have:

> "Thus says the Lord. 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, exercising loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight,' says the Lord."

The prophet places knowing God above all earthly values - wisdom, power and influence, money - and relates it to justice and mercy. And what a glorious line we have right from the mind of God himself: *In these things (mercy and justice) I delight!* This indicates that one knows God when he shows mercy and practices justice. There is Jeremiah's judgment upon king Jehoiakim, son of the righteous Josiah, in Jer. 22, whose destiny was to be "the burial of an ass" because his reign, unlike that of his father, was filled with violence and oppression.

Speaking to Jehoiakim of his father, Jeremiah said, "He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Is this not to know me?, says the Lord." To the incumbent king he said, "But you have eyes and heart for dishonest gain, for shedding innocent blood, and for practicing oppression and violence." (Jer. 22:17)

Here the Bible is its own interpreter of what is involved in knowing God: *Is this not to know me?*, says the Lord, referring to Josiah's compassion for the poor and needy.

If we read the Bible through the eyes of third-world people who have never known anything but famine, violence, and oppression, we could identify with Jeremiah's concept of what it is to know God better than we can as the most affluent nation on earth. It is easy for us to see knowing God in terms of going to church, saying prayers, and supporting missions. We might be able to see how oil-rich Arab sheikhs with their millions in Swiss banks while many of their own people suffer from poverty would come under the prophet's judgment, but not ourselves. Our economic status in the world makes it next to impossible for us to comprehend the pitiable plight of the world's poor. And our religion is such, centered as it is in forms and institutions, that we are hardly prepared to accept Jeremiah's verdict that knowing God is equated with showing mercy to the poor and needy. This judgment is all the more serious when we realize that our wealth is at least partly at the expense of the dispossessed people. Ours remains the kind of world where the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. And are we all that concerned? The Bible says that that concern is what it means to know God.

This is also the verdict of the New Testament, especially as revealed in the person of Jesus Christ, who, while he was not in stark poverty, was a poor man. But he was not always poor. According to 2 Cor. 8:9 he was once rich in heaven, but for our sake he became poor "that you through his poverty might become rich." But it is *heavenly* riches that Jesus brought to us. In that passage Paul, like Jeremiah, identifies the grace of God with rich sharing with the poor like Jesus did. Likewise in Philip. 2:5-8 the apostle refers to the preexistent Christ as being in the form of God and equal with God, and yet "he made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men." He goes on to say that Jesus humbled (or emptied) himself, taking on human form, and at last died on the Cross. That is how the Messiah knew God: *giving himself to others.* It is in that context that Paul urges us to have the mind of Christ and to be like him. And we are never so much like Jesus and never so close to the heart of God as when we are giving ourselves to others.

If we interpret the Scriptures aright on this subject, we can only conclude that, whatever else may be involved in knowing God, there is no way to know God apart from a sacrificial concern, motivated by love and mercy, for the wellbeing of others.

In fact, the verdict of Scripture demands that this is the essence of religion, fellowship with God and a compassion for suffering humanity. One prophet weighed the question as to precisely what God requires, and he got his answer in terms of "Doing what is right (justice), loving mercy, and walking humbly with God" (Micah 6:8). When Jesus moved toward a bottom line of what religion is all about, he came up with the two greatest commandments: loving God with all our hearts and loving our fellow human beings as we love ourselves. (Mk. 10:29-31)

What is religion all about? Knowing God. And what does that mean? Love (mercy) and justice. In the Bible love and justice come to mean the same thing, or we might say that justice is love distributed. Just as knowing God and loving God are often equated. As in 1 Jn. 2:3: "Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." As the apostle continues it becomes evident that the main point of keeping God's commandments is to love (do justice to) one's fellow human being: "He who loves his brother abides in the light" (verse 10); "He who hates his brother is in darkness." (2:11)

Knowing God is many things. It is making God the center of our lives; it is enthroning Him as King in our hearts; it is practicing the presence of God; it is fellowship with God; it is seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. And to the Christian knowing God is to know Jesus Christ, who is the prefect revelation of God. And it is in Jesus that we find the perfect expression of what is basic in knowing God, the giving of oneself to those in need.

While I have used the subject of knowing God to illustrate how we should not neglect the profundity of the Bible with such oversimplification as "It means what it says," the subjects that could be chosen are endless. What did Jesus mean by his frequent references to the kingdom of God, whether "Thy kingdom come," The kingdom of God is within you," or "Everyone is violently pressing into the kingdom"? Clearly, it does not help all that much to simply say it means what it says.

I was impressed with this insight from John C. L. Gibson's commentary on Genesis, in reference to the first chapter of the Bible: "It has that strange mixture of simplicity and profundity which is the mark of all great literature." And he might have added that you don't interpret any great literature by simply saying it means what it says.

What is the meaning of Bacon's immortal line "Knowledge is power" or Socrates' "The unexamined life is not worth living," or Shakespeare's "To thine own self be true"? Or these gripping lines from Tennyson?

> Yet I doubt not through the ages one increasing
> purpose runs,
> And the thoughts of men are widened with the
> process of the suns.

And so with Paul's love hymn in 1 Cor. 13: "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." We probably never do more than to play around the edges of what great minds have sought to convey to us. The words themselves may be simple enough, but the tapestry of the thought is woven at a level that seems always to be just beyond our reach. I am amazed that so much sadness, meaning, and truth could be crowded into a single sentence as this one from old Abe Lincoln not long before his assassination: "I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me." We might say that Lincoln meant what he said, but one could write a long chapter on our country's most tragic era around that single sentence. It means what it says? That is to trivialize it.

It remains to be said that the Bible sometimes does *not* mean what it says. The commentaries are not sure what Jesus meant by "Lead us not into temptation," but since God does not tempt man anyway they are sure that Jesus did not mean what he seemed to have told his disciples to pray. And we all agree that when he said, "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you," he did not mean that sin is to be dealt with through eye surgery. And Ps. 121:1 means the opposite of what it says, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help" (KJV), for the poet is saying his help does *not* come from the hills where the gods of the Canaanites dwell, but, as the next verse indicates, his help comes from the Lord.

This is enough to make the point that the Bible is not as simple as we sometimes try to make it. It is a book (or many books) that needs a good teacher, and so God has placed teachers in the church. And the Holy Spirit is our teacher. And with a few helpful aids, one can go far in teaching himself, especially when with childlike faith he comes within understanding distance in his passion to know. *-the Editor*

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WISDOM FROM CHINA: "GIVE IN A BIT"

Their names are Bess Li and Li Rou-Xin, and they are wife and husband. She is American and so her sir name comes last; he is Chinese and so his sir name comes first. Westerners may not always realize that in a name like Mao Tse-tung that the first name is the last name.

Bess and Rou-Xin were interviewed on the "Today Show," and they were asked how a trans-cultural marriage like theirs can be made to work. Bess gave the answer, drawing on a Chinese word which she defined as *Give in a bit.* I was impressed that she had identified a principle that goes to the very heart of all human relations. Life is such and human relations are such that there is no way to make everything work for long except by the principle of reasonable compromise or giving in a bit. It applies to negotiating on the local school board or in the circles of international diplomacy.

Most Chinese wisdom goes back to Confucius who based his philosophy on right relationships, the key being sympathy. Like all the wise men of the ancient East, as well as the Greek philosophers, Confucius believed that the golden rule of life is to avoid extremes. Through sympathetic understanding both individuals and nations move closer to each other. Conformity, so long as it does not call for a compromise of one's convictions, is considered a virtue. So, "Give in a bit" is sound Confucianism. But is it not a universal principle and does it not find expression in the Christian faith? Even more, is it not a principle of Christian unity?

If I chose but one text for "Give in a bit" it would be Phillip. 4:5: "Let your gentleness be known to all men." The gentleman was, by the way, the ideal man in Confucianism, and the wise men laid out a lot of philosophy on what it meant to be gentle. Alexander Campbell too was willing to make that the basis of his educational philosophy, *educating one to be a gentleman* (or a gentlewoman). But he stressed the difference between being *genteel,* which is a matter of wealth, class, and finesse, and being *gentle,* which is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, in short Christlikeness.

And what did Paul mean by gentleness - or moderation as it is sometimes rendered? MacKnight says it means "meekness under provocation, readiness to forgive injuries, sweetness of disposition." Lenski sees the term to mean yieldingness. I think it could be

rendered, "Let your sweet reasonableness be known to all men." MacKnight cites Tit. 3:2 as similar: "to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men." He sees the apostle calling for this kind of example before the world "because thereby they would effectually recommend their religion to their persecutors." And, as 1 Pet. 2:12 puts it: "they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation."

It is an impressive promise that the very ones that persecute us will be led to glorify God when they see in us the sweet disposition that is in Christ. And when the world sees in us that love and acceptance that gives in a bit they will know that we are truly the disciples of Christ, according to Jn. 13:35. And did not our Lord pray to the effect that the world would believe once it saw his disciples united in their love for one another? (Jn. 17:21)

It is the sweet, gentle, forbearing spirit that is the bond of the more meaningful human relationships. A marriage endures, *joyously* endures, not because the couple sees things alike but because they are sweet and reasonable, and because when differences are a problem each one gives in a bit. So with a church: it can be neither a united church nor a happy church on the basis of doctrinal agreement, but by its members giving in a bit in a spirit of love. A readiness to forgive injuries is the way of peace, and if one is of the disposition to give in a bit the readiness is always there.

This does not mean that truth is ever to be compromised. In reference to "the weightier matters" - those things of which the kingdom of God consists - we are not to give in even a bit. When it involves the integrity of the gospel or our commitment to Christ, we must be as Paul was in Gal. *2:5:* "to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you." And yet the same man was ready to give in on other matters: "If food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble." (1 Cor. 8:13)

This means that there are differences both tolerable and intolerable, but even when differences are intolerable we should be tolerant of the person. We can never yield to the presumptions of atheism, but the atheist should be able to see in us the disposition of loving acceptance. Our Lord had a way of distinguishing between the sin and the sinner. He did not approve of adultery but he accepted the adulterer; he did not endorse Zachaeus' way of life but he nonetheless went to his home for lunch.

But most of our problems in the church are either of a personal sort or over doctrinal matters that are not all that important - or even when we deem them important they are not essential. Here we must have the grace to give in a bit. It is the grace of Rom. *15:7:* "Receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God." What wonderful grace it is that Christ received me even when I was still wrong about a lot of things! That is the grounds on which I am to receive you.

This we can do, each of us, without ever violating our own conscience. I can receive all my sisters and brothers in Christ *as equals* without endorsing any belief or practice that runs counter to my own conviction. If I think it is wrong to sing with a piano or to take communion from an individual cup, then I should quietly and lovingly refrain from such practices. But I can still accept those who have no such scruples. The apostle Paul sees no problem in such difference so long as we love and accept one another anyway: "One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind." (Rom. 14:5)

That last line is one of the most liberating truths in the New Testament. I am not to be judged by my brother's scruples, but I am to be judged for the way I treat him when his scruples run counter to my own. I am to be convinced in my *own* mind, not that of another.

This is what unity is all about: not only disagreeing agreeably, not only giving in a bit, but loving each other, accepting each other, and forgiving each other, just as Christ loved, accepted, and forgave us. Warts and all, differences and all, no questions asked and no lines drawn. —*the Editor*

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DRINKING TOGETHER

A news item out of Harlingen, Texas caught my eye. McHenry Tichenor, 89, is a veteran of the 111th Ammunition Train, 36th Division, which fought in France during World War I, a 186-man unit. In the 70 years since they were sent off to war 184 of the men have passed on, a number of them not surviving the war itself. When they had their last reunion *25* years ago there were 65 still living.

Now there are only two. Tichenor will reunite with the other survivor of the unit, Roy Baker, 94, this week in Oklahoma City. They will drink champagne together. Many years ago the veterans purchased a bottle of Moet champagne with the understanding that the last survivor would drink in memory of all the others. Not wanting to drink alone, Tichenor and Baker are getting together to drink in meaningful memory.

The writeup explains that a bottle of spirits for the last survivor is an old military custom, dating back at least to the Civil War. Tichenor hopes that it might be a joyous occasion. He doesn't want to moan over the past, as he put it, but to find things to laugh about. The occasion has given Tichenor opportunity to say that while he saw lots of death in France, "It was futile. We had no business in it. What we've done in our wars is we've destroyed our natural resources."

One is left to wonder if after 70 years to think about it if most veterans would not reach a similar conclusion regarding the futility of rational creatures meeting in mortal combat on a field of battle. The chances are that if Tichenor's 184 buddies who have passed on could speak their verdict would not be all that different. And Tichenor is a man who might be listened to, for he is an authentic survivor in more ways than one. At 89 he still drives to work every day, owning as he does nine radio stations in six Texas towns.

I was so intrigued by this story that I could not turn it loose. I told Ouida that if I were a poet I would write a poem about those two old men who went to war together when they were but boys now drinking together as old men in memory of they're not sure what. I find myself wanting to meet and drink with them. There are questions I would like to ask, and I might help them to find something to laugh about. That part of the story I find especially touching: they are hopeful that they can find cause to laugh together. Seventy years later!

I shared the story with some of my aged friends at a nursing home I visit on a regular basis. Birdie, who was abused as a girl and has nursed the bitterness for some 70 years, responded that if she met with the two veterans that she would have nothing to laugh about. For sometime I have tried to help her to overcome her bitterness and to forgive the stepfather who was mean to her. "I had to work all the time behind a plow, and I got very little schooling and never even had a doll," she has told me. She married an older man late in life and is now a widow. I tell her that as she allows Jesus to make his home in her heart that *he* will forgive the step-father as he forgave those who crucified him.

I told Birdie that if the two old veterans would use the occasion to count their blessings that they would find plenty of things to rejoice about, and that she too could forget the pains of yesteryear if she would name her blessings and think about good things. Then I sang a few lines of the old hymn with which she was familiar:

> When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed;
> When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,
> Count your many blessings, name them one by one,
> And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.

Even though Birdie is not a well woman, she was soon counting her blessings. She still has a good appetite; she can walk up and down the halls without assistance; she can feed and dress herself. "I have a lot to be thankful for," she finally conceded. It would have been a good time for champagne.

Ruth is confined to a wheelchair and has no one to visit her except a nephew who recently conned her into letting him sell her diamond rings, which has left her terribly depressed. When I told her the story of the last two soldiers of a World War I unit meeting and drinking together, she wept. But that was not unusual for Ruth, for she often weeps, especially when we say the Lord's prayer together.

That you may know that amusing things do happen in nursing home I must tell you of the dear old senile soul who was confined to a wheel-chair not far from where I was sitting with Ruth. She motioned for me, so I excused myself from Ruth to sit with her for a few minutes. She wanted me to free her from her chair, but I assured her that the attendant would soon take care of her. Back with Ruth I was telling her that we can praise God in a nursing home as well as at church, and I proceeded to describe how the angels in heaven praise God: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, who is, and who is to come!"

The old sister that I had tried to pacify, still in distress over her confinement, overheard what I was saying to Ruth. Suddenly she blurted out for all in the big room to hear, *Holy, holy, holy! Get me out of here!"*

That really broke us up and we all had a great laugh. It was time for champagne! Surely the angels took notice!

Drinking together is as old as human history and it has long had symbolic value. Jesus "took the cup" out of the culture of the times. He did not invent it. And when he knocked at the door of one of his churches, inviting anyone who would to dine with him, he drew upon a cultural practice with which they were familiar. Drinking together is sharing in an event, perhaps one fraught with great significance. Drinking together tends to break down barriers and makes one vulnerable to intimacy. It might be a meaningful expression of friendship and fellowship.

The two old soldiers uncorking the bottle of champagne in memory of their buddies of bygone days reminded me of the meaning of the Lord's Supper. To do the Supper "in memory of me" must mean more than calling to mind a Person. It is remembering and sharing in an event. It is not simply to bring to mind the Cross, but the resurrection that followed and the victory that Christ has given us.

And it is being thankful. As we partake of the cup our hearts can rejoice and we can be thankful that there was a Calvary and an Easter morning. And there is the church through the centuries who "Mid toil and tribulation, and tumult of her war; she waits the consummation of peace forever more."

When the old veterans uncork the bottle they will surely drink to the country for which they fought together, "Here's to the land of the free and the home of the brave."

And they will be thankful.

They will remember old Sarge who was as tough as nails but in his moment of valor risked his life when he pulled a young private to safety under fire. "Here's to old Sarge, who, if he was here would surely say, 'Fellows, this champagne is worth waitin' 70 years for!'

And they will laugh. —*the Editor*

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What the Church of Christ Must Say to This Generation:

WE HAVE BEEN WRONG!

(This article was first of all a letter to a member of the Church of Christ in Oregon, one of our subscribers. We pass it along to our readers because it states in a practical way what we believe to be the basic problem the Church of Christ has in relating itself to the church at large. We need a great deal of honest and soul- searching dialogue on the issues raised here. *-the Editor)*

Your letter is at hand and I thank you for being willing to write candidly about some of your reactions to *Restoration Review.* You may be right and I may be wrong. It is good for us to exchange ideas and stir up each other's thinking. I hope my brief response to some things you said will prove helpful to you, though I suppose my purpose is not to get you to think as I do. I write simply because it is appropriate as brothers in Christ that we try to understand where the other is coming from. What is important is that we love each other as Christ loves us, and you may be assured of my love for you, whether you agree with me or not.

I agree with you that all the saved are in Christ and in the church revealed in the Bible. But I would distinguish between the Body of Christ as revealed in Scripture and what we have come to know as the Church of Christ (a distinct name, no other is usually used) such as is associated with Pepperdine University, Abilene Christian, and the *Gospel Advocate.* One is a denomination, generally recognized as such; the other is the community of God that has existed since Pentecost. I see *all* Christians as in that community of God, not just those in churches associated with the Stone-Campbell Movement.

I would not challenge your position on being non-instrumental. I am also. But I would question your right or my right to make that opinion or conviction a test of fellowship. You say you use a tuning fork and round notes in order to assist you in singing. This I can appreciate, but you must realize that in using such things you are not being true to what we usually argue about "the silence of Scripture." Where does the Bible authorize a tuning fork and round

notes? If you can use a tuning fork which assists you with one note at a time, you should be able to understand why your brothers in the Christian Church use another kind of instrument that makes several notes. Is it the number of notes that makes it wrong?

You say that Paul tells us what instrument to use, the voice and heart. But if you can use a tuning fork and round notes to help you to sing and make melody in your heart, why cannot your brother use *shaped* notes and a piano to assist him in doing the same thing? Actually this is all that goes on in either a Church of Christ or Christian Church. We are all singing and making melody in our hearts to God. The aids we choose to use are a matter of opinion and preference. In fact even in a Christian Church they are all just singing and praising God. Only one person is playing, and she usually is not singing! So how can that be a big deal to us? Besides, it is not really any of our business what accessories others may choose to use, whether choirs, gowns, candles, hymnals, instruments. All we have the right to ask is that they honor the "Thus saith the Lord" of Scripture, those things clearly and distinctly set forth in the Bible. We must honor what all our people agree to: "In matters of opinion, liberty."

You misunderstand me, or I have not made myself clear, if you suppose that I believe it does not make any difference what name one wears. All my life I have urged what our people have always made their plea: *Christians only.* I delight in being a Christian. That name matters greatly to me. But I can believe in being a Christian only without believing that we are the only Christians. Moreover, I can believe that a Baptist is a Christian even when he wears a name I could not conscientiously wear. That is because he too loves and obeys Christ like I do, to the best of his understanding, and he too honors the name of Christ by professing to be a Christian.

I share your concern for divisions within the Body of Christ, but I cannot understand your implication that I am somehow contributing to such divisions. My plea is for peace and harmony among brothers in Christ. I contend that we can love and accept each other as sisters and brothers in Christ and yet differ in preferences, methods, and opinions. We can unite upon "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," as Eph. 4 assures us.

I would remind you, kind brother, that most if not all the divisions you decry are created over matters of which the kingdom of God does not consist. We have divided and subdivided because we reject other Christians and make tests of fellowship over matters of opinion. Surely I cannot be accused of causing division when I remind our people that *we* are guilty of making laws that God has not made, and creating parties over our own personal interpretations. If so, then our Lord himself is also guilty of causing division, for this was part of his message to the Pharisees.

We in Churches of Christ will never be the unity people that both our history and our heritage would have us be until we rise above three damaging fallacies: (1) that we are the only Christians; (2) that what we call "The Church of Christ" is the only true church; (3) that acappella singing is the law of God and that it is sinful to use instruments of music. These are more than fallacies or myths or errors, for they reflect an attitude on the part of many Church of Christ folk that must change if we are to have an authentic witness in the larger Christian world. It is imperative at this point in our history to confess to our fellow Christians that we have been wrong on these three points. If we did that, they would both love us and admire us, and they would then listen to us in reference to the many things in which we are right. What a cleansing message it would be, *We have been wrong!*

Not only do you call me "Mr." throughout the letter, carefully avoiding any implication that I might be your brother in Christ, but you also name me as a wolf among the faithful sheep. While you close on a note of hope, it is not hope in Christ, but a hope that my readers will recognize my writings to be the trash it is.

The ideas and the spirit reflected in your letter are what I am seeking to correct in the Church of Christ. Do I have to agree with you that instrumental music is a sin and that all those outside "The Church of Christ" are going to hell before you will accept me as your brother? Am I a wolf in sheep's clothing because I do not equate the Body of Christ with what you call the Church of Christ? (If so, dear brother, there are more wolves around than there are sheep!) And is my writing trash because I criticize our own people as well as praise them?

So be it. Since I know where you are coming from and since I was once there myself, I have no problem loving and accepting you as my brother. I see hurt and despair in your letter, and so I may love you even more. I hope you will keep reading and that after awhile you will write again.

Peace!,

Leroy Garrett

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AS OPENLY AS SODOM

W. Carl Ketcherside

One wonders why Sodom became so wicked. Other cities were given over to sinning as most cities were. But few places in the world were so wholly given to transgression. Even the name has been given to a grievous sexual sin that is still prevalent today. The name has the

literal connotation of "a place of lime." It is mentioned 49 times in the Bible, ten of which are in the new covenant scriptures. Always there is about it an air of crime and utter disappearance. The first time we hear of it, all the men of the city, young and old, surrounded the house of Lot. They yelled out for him to bring the men out to them who had come to spend the night. The Good News Version says, "The men of Sodom wanted to have sex with them." Isaiah refers to it in chapter 3, verse 9.

The chapter begins with the prediction that the Lord is going to take away from Jerusalem and Judah "everything and everyone that the people depend on." He will take away their food and their water. Nebuchadnezzar led three assaults against the city. The first was in 606 B.C. The last was in *587* B.C. The siege had become so intense that the people sought to eat their own children. The record literally says "the people had nothing left to eat."

The record goes on to say that God took away "their heroes and their soldiers, their judges and their prophets, their fortunetellers and their statesmen, their military and civilian leaders, their politicians and everyone who uses magic to control events." It would be hard to administer a city with all of the administrators taken away from it. I am thinking how difficult it would be to maintain order in Saint Louis with all of the governors and pseudo-governors having been removed from it. I am sure Jerusalem was no better off. They were told that the Lord would let the people be governed by immature boys.

The earth now has 5 billion people. It is growing by 87 million each year. That seems a little incredible to former history students like myself. But even more astounding is the fact that 90 percent of this growth is occurring in countries the least able to support it. Every year the farmland supports fewer people. And every year more of them crowd into the cities. Often they are forced to live like animals in the warrens of towns incapable of supporting them. In the filth and refuse of such cities men live like beasts of the field. Humanity is crushed out of them. Degradation takes its place.

Heroes and soldiers disappear. When there is nothing worth defending or fighting for, they are no longer needed. Judges and prophets are forced out of existence. When all are in the same unbridled mess there is no use of a judge to determine the right or wrong of things. Prophets are not required to speak glowingly of a coming age, or of a time of plenty. Fortunetellers who are so hungry they cannot speak, or so thirsty their tongues grow silent, will be allowed to perish in the calamitous state of things. Statesmen who have no state to rule and regulate can say farewell. It is that way today in many places.

That is an apt portrayal of conditions in Ethiopia and the Sudan. And every year the desert encroaches upon land which was fertile but a few years ago. Some there are who blame the Russians for it. But it seems that rather than point the finger of accusation it would be better by far to make known ways of reclamation. Lebanon, Pakistan, Iraq and Iran need help. Raw

wounds need to be healed. Starving bodies need to be filled. A great mass of gold trickling through manicured fingers will avail nothing if pitiable cries are uttered from the perishing throats of boys and girls.

Most of you will recognize at once that I am writing about things as described by the evangelical prophet Isaiah, son of Amoz. He points out that doom and collapse are the two-fold fate which result from doing things against the Lord and openly insulting God himself. He says that their prejudices will be held against them. He declares that "your leaders are misleading you, so that you do not know which way to turn."

If you read the daily newspaper regularly, or if you watch television news daily, or listen to the newscasts over radio, you are generally wandering around in a daze. I know of one elderly person who watches the soap operas with avid interest. She says she does not listen to the news because it confuses and confounds her. She chooses the liaisons and bedroom scenes and fills her mind with such contamination and filth.

God still rules. He knows exactly what is going on. He knows what is happening in the already over-crowded world. He knows every nook and cranny of the earth's surface, every cave and mountain vastness. He knows what is in your heart and mine as I write these words. And God is saying again to all of us, You have no right to crush my people and take advantage of the poor. One thing can be certain. The poor have a defender. There is someone who counts. And one of these days things will be made right.

I get to thinking occasionally as I read that it is no mere accident that the poor are cared for. It is not the work of politicians or statesmen. It is not the work of governors or mighty men. It is the work of little people. They do not expect to leave thousands of dollars to be spent by others. They do not postpone their sharing until death, when someone else will take over and apportion it out. They realize that God sees, knows and understands.

What a magnificent power is invested in those who realize what a blessing is afforded to be able to work, to make enough upon which to live and provide for the helpless. How they cheer my heart. How they make my soul rejoice. It can never be said of them, "The city gates will mourn and cry, and the city itself will be like a woman sitting on the ground stripped naked." That is the fate of a city whose people "sin as openly as the people of Sodom did." Fretting gates and a city sitting on the ground naked! What a price to pay for open sin! — *4420 Jamieson 1-C, St. Louis, MO 63109*

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OUR CHANGING WORLD

We now have a Members of Churches of Christ for Scouting, the purpose of which is to interpret scouting to members of Churches of Christ and to promote the Good Servant program. Those interested may write to MCCS, ACU Station, Box 7618, Abilene, TX *79699.*

The Sixth Annual Denton Lectures will be held at the Pearl St. Church of Christ in Denton, TX., Nov. 8-12. The theme will be the Epistles of John, and there will be daily forums on controversial issues, including imputed righteousness and fellowship and unity.

The Alexander Campbell Bicentennial Lectures, sponsored by the Disciples of Christ Historical Society, will be held in three states next year, which will be the 200th year since Campbell's birth in County Down, Ireland in 1788. A total of nine lectures will be given by Robert 0. Fife, Richard L. Harrison, Jr., Thomas Olbricht, William J. Richardson, D. Newell Williams, T. Dwight Bozeman, Samuel S. Hill, Barbara Brown Zikmund. The locations are Fort Worth, TX. (March 16-17); Claremont, CA. (April 18-19); Indianapolis, IN. (October 10-11). The lectures will be published. For further information: DCHS, 110119th Ave. South, Nashville, TN. 37212.

In what they call "a brief but touching ceremony" the Burke Rd. Church of Christ in Houston has a dedication service for their new babies. The elders lay hands on the infants and the parents promise to live exemplary lives before their children. The church in turn makes a commitment to the family, accepting the children as their own.

The growth of Christianity in Korea in recent decades has been phenomenal, growing four times faster than the population. While Asia in general has only three to four percent of its population that are Christians, Korea's population is upwards of 25'" Christian, about eight million, Protestant and Catholic. But the Koreans, like the church at large, have a proclivity to fracture into sects, which threatens the future of the church. The Presbyterians, who have been there the longest and number over four million, have splintered into 32 separate denominations.

Last summer 35,000 "Charismatics" gathered in New Orleans for the North American General Congress on the Holy Spirit and World Evangelism. Some 40 denominations were represented, including more than 300 who identified themselves as the Campbell-Stone Restoration Movement, led by Jim Bevis, a longtime Church of Christ minister. Their purpose is to launch a cooperative thrust that will win at least a majority of the world's population by the year 2000.

The film "Wrestling With God," which will tell the story of the beginnings of Christian Churches-Churches of Christ at a professional level, is still in the works. While they have upwards of $100,000 in hand or promised, it is not nearly enough for the ambitious effort that they have planned. This project deserves our support and we ought to see it through. The address is: The Stone-Campbell Film Project, 3600 Berry Dr., Studio City, CA. 91604.

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BOOK NOTES

For those who want a concise, first-rate dictionary of the Bible we recommend *Erdmans Bible Dictionary.* It is hailed by scholars as a veritable mine of information and *Christianity Today* refers to it as the finest in its class and a powerful aid to understanding the Bible. It tells about every name and place mentioned in the Bible and there introductions to every book. We will send you a copy at $29.95 postpaid.

The Mind of Christ is a 274-page Festschrift in honor of Seth Wilson, longtime professor at Ozark Christian College. Edited by Lynn Gardner, various writers present essays of general interest about the Bible. Considering the exemplary life of the one it honors, we can say that the book is well- titled. $12.95 postpaid.

Our people are becoming more Interested in their history and heritage, and this is a good time to say that Alexander Campbell believed that history is best studied through biography. So you would do well to collect biographies of our history as they become available. One such one, just off the press, is *Moses Lard: That Prince of Preachers* by Kenneth Van Deusen. The commitment of this old pioneer will inspire you and his preaching will move you, even if you do not always agree. $12.95 postpaid.

It may sound expensive but it is a library of information in one volume. The ten-volume *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* has been abridged into a single volume of 1400 pages. It is a magnificent achievement, for one gets the best of 8,420 pages of scholarly information. This is called "the Little Kittel," in that it gives the essence of the great Kittel's comprehensive discussions of 2300 theological words in the New Testament. It is clearly and concisely done, appropriate for any serious student. $49.95 postpaid.

Walt Yancey's *Endangered Heritage: An Examination of Church of Christ Doctrine* has impressed those who have read it. Orthodox circles insist that it should never have been published, while others want their friends to read it once they see that it "Lets the cat out of the

bag" in terms of how the Church of Christ got into the sectarian mess that its in. It has special merit in that it is written by an unknown, an accomplished scientist who has quietly sat in the pew all these years, *thinking*. $12.95 postpaid.

Captives of the Word by Louis and Bess Cochran has been reprinted by College Press, and we can thank God for that, for this provides in capsule form, only 252 pages, a delightful and informative history of Disciples of Christ, Christian Churches, and Churches of Christ. The chapter on "Goodbye to the Baptists," which tells of our separation from that church, illustrates the relaxed way in which the story unfolds. $12.95 postpaid.

Due to an extended illness of our book binder our bound volume for 1985-86 is delayed, but if you have a standing order it will eventually be sent to you. We have five other bound volumes still available, which are $40 for all five, postpaid, if you pay in advance. These are: *Principles of Unity and Fellowship* (1977), $5.95; *The Ancient Order* (1978), *$5.95; Blessed Are the Peacemakers* and *With All the Mind* (1979-80), $10.50; *Jesus Today* (1981-82), $10.50; *The Doe of the Dawn* (1983-84), $10.50. These five volumes cover eight years of publication, 1977-1984.

You may send this journal to others at the reduced rate of only $3.00 per name per year in clubs of four or more, $12.00 minimum. Some of our most appreciative readers have come to us this way.

When

you move it is important that you not only inform us in advance, but that you send us *both* your old and new addresses.

We have purchased an Apple Macintosh Computer, and by year's end our mailing will be computerized. And Ouida will be setting type for this journal on the computer 5 Image Writer, which should reduce our costs and increase efficiency. This means that our antique Addressograph and Graphotype, along with thousands of metal plates, will go to the junkyard and then we will have more room in our garage office. Ouida is excited! She will no longer have to dislodge stuck plates with a screwdriver.

We have been spoiled by the enthusiastic reception of *The Stone-Campbell Movement* by Leroy Garrett, which tells

the story of our history. You can still get a copy for $21.95 postpaid, if you pay in advance. We still offer a bonus copy when you send us $24.00 for eight subs to this journal, new or renewal, including your own. Upwards of 10,000 copies of the history have now been sold.

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READER'S EXCHANGE

I would like to put your and Ouida's picture in the Hall of Fame instead of under glass on my desk alongside many of my favorite people. If it is the Lord's will that we remain on this celestial globe that much longer, your mother-in-law and I will celebrate our 92nd birthday on the same day. — *Stewart Hanson, Sr., Long Beach, CA.*

Tell Ouida that a great many people out there would like to see her picture on a regular basis. — *Michael Hall, Grand Junction, CO.*

I have read your writings since *Bible Talk* days with interest and profit. 1 congratulate you on the contribution you have made to a better understanding and to a better attitude concerning the things of God. - *Bill Gahr, Fenton, MO.*

Congratulations on 35 years of publication. Forget 40 years. Let's go for 50! - *Terry Fisher, Cincinnati, OH.*

I enjoyed the 35th Anniversary Edition. Mrs. Garrett's beauty makes your charming references to her in your essays understatements. - *Joe Bain, Decatur, AL*

I discovered that our preacher had a copy of your book, *The Stone-Campbell Movement,* and I read his copy from cover *to* cover. I loved it and must have a copy of my own. I can honestly say that I never learned so much from a single book. I always wanted to know about this movement because I was raised in the church. Boy, was I surprised to learn that the church of Christ as we know it will be 100 years old this month. I grew up thinking that we were the only Christians because we followed the correct pattern. The spirit that I have seen has been one of "We arc right, you are wrong, case closed, unless of course you want to change." Thanks be to God that our attitude is slowly changing. — *Chris Kirklin, Pearland, TX.*

I was pleased to receive your note expressing your desire to print my remarks in your readers' column. You asked if I minded my name being used. I certainly do not mind. In fact, you can capitalize it and print it in hot pink if you desire. This rabbit is tired of hiding in the thickets. Use my name and let them release the hounds. — *Randy Travis, Madisonville, KY.*

(Dr. Travis' comments appeared in our September issue. I pass along this additional comment so that you can see that at least some of our people who long for change are willing to stand up and be counted. Once we grow beyond the cowardly mentality of "Don't rock the boat!" the changes we desire will come sooner. While I like Randy's metaphor about the rabbit that is tired of hiding in the thickets, I also like the prophet Malachi's imagery of those who find freedom from "the Sun of Righteousness." He says, "You will be as free and happy as calves let out of a stall" (Mal. 4:3 TEV). —*Ed.)*

I really appreciate your publication. It constantly stretches my mind and makes me think. I am renewing for two more years of enjoyable, enlightening, and edifying reading. —*Mark Cameron, Terre Haute, IN.*

I enjoyed attending a seminar on unity at Quaker Ave. Church of Christ in Lubbock. J. Ervin Waters gave an eloquent review of the unique plea for unity in our history. Re showed that our forefathers differed on just as many and just as serious issues as we do, *without dividing.* His thesis was that we have lost something precious which the founders of the movement held in common. Surely he is right! — *Curtis Shelburne, Muleshoe, TX.*

(What our pioneers had that we have lost is a passion for unity. Ervin Waters, who is of the one-cup, non-Sunday School persuasion, is a good example of one who has recovered that passion. — *Ed.*)

I am by no means casual about standing with you in prayer and in unashamed identification with your person and work. Please be encouraged to continue associating thought and spiritual rationality with devotion to the Lord. He is honored, and men are edified by this approach. It perfectly comports with both the nature and purpose of our Father which is in heaven. — *Given O. Blakely, Cedar Lake, IN.*

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Address all mail to: 1201 Windsor Dr., Denton, TX 76201*

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